**Literature Review: A Cross Cultural Analysis of Same-Sex Marriages**

Isabella R. Olson

Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminal Justice Studies, Longwood University

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Carl Riden, Ph.D.

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**Introduction**

Throughout time, societal views, laws, cultures, and religions are constantly changing on same-sex marriages. Same-sex marriages consist of a marriage between two people of the same gender. Historically, heterosexual marriages (marriage of a man and women) were the only marriages that were legal and accepted. However, societies are constantly evolving and with this, same-sex marriages have become a societal debate. Over 17 countries have accepted this societal change and legalized same-sex marriages (Taylor, 2015). Other countries still hold a more traditional view on the values of marriage, which is usually based on culture.

It is important to examine why certain cultures are or are not accepting this form of marriage. Countries are rich in their culture and evolve at their own pace. In some cultures, like the United States, same-sex marriage is legal nationwide and increasingly becoming accepted. However, in European Culture, its legalization and acceptance vary by jurisdiction (Lipka & Masci, 2019). This analysis is going examine European culture acceptance of same-sex marriages overtime to today in comparison to the United States.

**Literature Review**

For this section of the paper, it is organized by researching American and European cultural acceptance of same-sex marriages and why they have or have not accepted this kind of marriage. After an in-depth analysis of the two cultures, key similarities and differences will be examined and discussed. 8scholarly and academic works have been used to organize this paper. When conducting research, these three cultures had significant data provided on same-sex marriages. Each culture had different levels of progression of acceptance from not legalized nor accepted to full legalization with high levels of acceptance.

***American Culture***

In 2015, the United States became the 17th country to legalize same-sex marriage (Taylor, 2015). Prior to this legalization, these marriages still occurred, but outside of society’s view. Wills (2015) stated, “Same-sex marriages, in all possible configurations and with all possible motivations, have taken place throughout the history of the United States”. Aside from societal views and enforced laws, these individuals still engaged in a union with someone of the same gender. The U.S. was not culturally accepting of these marriages. It was not until 1995 when the shift of acceptance for these marriages began (Pew Research Center, 2015). Utah was the first state to establish legal protection for these marriages called The Defense Marriage Act (Pew Research Center, 2015). Then in 2004, Massachusetts was the first state to legalize same-sex marriages (Pew Research Center, 2015). Once it became legalized in one state, it started to become culturally accepted. In 2004, 37% of adults favored same-sex marriages and almost doubled to 62% of adults favoring same-sex marriages in 2017 (Masci at al., 2019). The acceptance of same-sex marriages grew as more states recognized their unions. After this cultural shift towards recognition of same-sex marriages, 36 of the 50 states enacted legalization by 2015 (Masci et al., 2019). As society changed its views to become more accepting, American culture also changed with it to be more accepting.

***European Culture***

In Central and Eastern Europe, many citizens hold traditional viewpoints on societal issues that oppose same-sex marriages (Pew Research Center, 2017). Religion has a major impact on traditional viewpoints. In the European countries that are mostly orthodox, the sexual and gender norms are more traditional (Pew Research Center, 2017). This means individuals here are more likely to reject homosexuality and same-sex marriages. In Armenia, which is an orthodox majority country, their rating of citizens who say homosexuality should not be accepted is at 97% compared to Hungry, which is a Catholic majority country, at 54% (Pew Research Center, 2017). In Catholic majority countries in Central and Eastern Europe, most Catholics also oppose same-sex marriages. For example, nine-in ten- Catholics in Ukraine believe same-sex marriages should be illegal (Diamant). Religion in these countries is impacting the acceptance of same-sex marriages. Since religion is predominant in Central and Eastern Europe, legalization of same-sex marriages as not occurred (Masci & Desilver, 2019).

The majority of countries that have become more accepting of same-sex marriages and legalization is in Western Europe (Masci & Desilver, 2019). The Netherlands were the world’s first country to legalize same-sex marriage in 2001 (Lipka & Masci, 2019). After this, other western European countries followed suit and acceptance spread. 29 countries in Western Europe have either legalized or have some form of same-sex unions/civil partnerships legal (Lipka & Masci, 2019). However, Italy, not until 2016, did not recognize same-sex marriages due to its historical ties to the Roman Catholic Church (Lipka & Masci, 2019). In 2016, Italy, began recognizing same sex civil unions. While some parts of European culture accept and have legalized same-sex marriages as Western Europe, other parts like Central and Eastern Europe, have not. Religion is heavily practiced in these areas where traditional views of marriage are still predominant.

***Comparison***

American culture is more accepting of same sex-marriages compared to European culture. In the United States, it has been federally legalized and increasingly accepted. In Western Europe, it is more similar to American culture due to its acceptance and legalization. Eastern and Central Europe views are heavily driven based on religion. Orthodox and Catholic practices are still predominant in European culture which hinders same-sex marriages becoming legalized.

**Conclusion**

Inconclusion, the cultural acceptance of same-sex marriage is an evolving phenomenon that reflects the complexity of societal, cultural, and religious factors. The journey of the United States shows its acceptance through select states legalizing same-sex marriages to federal legalization. European cultures exhibit diverse acceptance of same-sex marriages based on predominant religious based countries. While Western European countries have embraced legalization and acceptance, Central and Easten European countries have more traditional viewpoints influenced by religion. Orthodox and Catholic-majority countries show resistance to accepting same-sex marriages. This cross-cultural analysis shows the contrasting attitudes between American and European culture. American culture saw a transformative shift in cultural acceptance while Europe presented a mosaic of acceptance levels. This analysis of these two cultures highlights the complexity of cultural evolution in the acceptance of same-sex marriages.

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